



Town of Groton, Connecticut

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Meeting Minutes - **Draft**

Representative Town Meeting

Moderator Jean-Claude Ambroise, Representatives Karin Adams, Scott W. Aument, Sr., Joseph Baril, Nancy E. Barnhart, Alicia Bauer, Genevieve Cerf, Susan Chase-Hildebrand, Michael Collins, Christine Conley, Susan Deane-Shinbrot, Luanne E. DeMatto, Nancy Driscoll, Dave Ferreira, Neal Gardner, Patrice Granatosky, Dolores Harrell, Karen Hatcher, Keith L. Hedrick, Jonathan Heller, Lynn Crockett Hubbard, Michael Dean Johnson, Rosanne E. Kotowski, Jim Loughlin, Elizabeth Luck, Jackie Massett, Bruce A. McDermott, Roscoe Merritt, Constance Miller, Scott Newsome, Richard J. Pasqualini, Jr., Betty A. Prochaska, Pam Ryley, Jack Sebastian, Dana S. Semeraro, Joan Steinfeld, Irma Streeter, Mark Svencer, Archie C. Swindell, Lori A. Watrous and Ivy R. Williams

Wednesday, December 14, 2011

7:30 PM

Groton Senior Center

Regular Meeting

A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL BY TOWN CLERK

*Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.
38 members were present, and a quorum was declared.*

Members Present: Rep. Adams, Moderator Ambroise, Rep. Aument, Rep. Baril, Rep. Bauer, Rep. Cerf, Rep. Chase-Hildebrand, Rep. Collins, Rep. Conley, Rep. Deane-Shinbrot, Rep. DeMatto, Rep. Driscoll, Rep. Ferreira, Rep. Gardner, Rep. Granatosky, Rep. Hatcher, Rep. Harrell, Rep. Hedrick, Rep. Heller, Rep. Hubbard, Rep. Johnson, Rep. Kotowski, Rep. Loughlin, Rep. Luck, Rep. Massett, Rep. Merritt, Rep. Miller, Rep. Newsome, Rep. Pasqualini Jr., Rep. Prochaska, Rep. Ryley, Rep. Semeraro, Rep. Steinfeld, Rep. Streeter, Rep. Svencer, Rep. Swindell, Rep. Watrous and Rep. Williams
Members Absent: Rep. Barnhart, Rep. McDermott and Rep. Sebastian

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Superintendent of Schools Paul Kadri, Town Mayor Heather Somers, Town Councilor Harry Watson, Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher and Assistant Town Clerk Sally Whitney.

B. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The members observed a moment of silence followed by the Salute to the Flag led by Rep. Pasqualini.

C. ORGANIZATION OF TWENTY-EIGHTH RTM

1. Administration of oath to all Representatives by Town Clerk

Town Clerk Moukawsher administered the oath of office to the 38 members present.

2. Adoption of Rules

2011-0224

Adoption of RTM Rules

RESOLUTION APPROVING ADOPTION OF RULES & PROCEDURES OF THE TWENTY-SEVENTH RTM

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Rules and Procedures of the Twenty-seventh RTM are temporarily adopted as the Rules and Procedures of the Twenty-eighth RTM elected November 8, 2011.

A motion was made by Rep. Pasqualini Jr., seconded by Rep. Baril, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

3. Election of Moderator

The Town Clerk called for nominations for the office of Moderator.

The name of Jean-Claude Ambroise was placed in nomination by Rep. Granatosky.

The name of Luanne DeMatto was placed in nomination by Rep. Massett.

There being no further nominations, the Town Clerk declared nominations closed.

The vote for the office of Moderator was 22 for Rep. Ambroise, 16 for Rep. DeMatto. (Voting for Rep. Ambroise were Reps. Ambroise, Baril, Bauer, Cerf, Chase-Hildebrand, Collins, Conley, Driscoll, Ferreira, Granatosky, Harrell, Hatcher, Heller, Loughlin, Luck, Merritt, Miller, Pasqualini, Ryley, Semeraro, Svencer and Williams. Voting for Rep. DeMatto were Reps. Adams, Aument, Deane-Shinbrot, DeMatto, Gardner, Hedrick, Hubbard, Johnson, Kotowski, Massett, Newsome, Prochaska, Steinfeld, Streeter, Swindell and Watrous.)

4. Presentation of gavel to Moderator

Town Clerk Betsy Moukawsher presented the gavel to Moderator Ambroise.

5. Brief recess to allow Moderator to review correspondence, etc.

A brief recess was taken and the meeting resumed at 7:52 p.m.

D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 9, 2011

A motion that the minutes be approved was made by Moderator Ambroise, seconded by Rep. Baril.

In response to Rep. Massett, the Town Clerk explained that minutes are prepared as a summary of discussion and actions for historical purposes. Minutes have never been a verbatim transcript.

The vote to approve the minutes carried 36 in favor, 2 abstentions. (Abstaining: Reps. Cerf and Hatcher.)

E. CITIZENS' PETITIONS

Andrew Parrella, 795 Eastern Point Road, congratulated the members for being elected and serving on the RTM. He feels that the RTM needs to be as vigilant and fiscally responsible in the coming budget deliberations as it was last year. He suggested that the RTM carefully review the direction of the Town in terms of how money is spent and what programs are eliminated. He hopes that the RTM will continue to listen to the concerns voiced by citizens. He urged cost containment on salaries and scrutinization of the Board of Education budget. He noted that the restructuring of the current school system may require several referenda before a final plan is approved.

Heather Bond Somers, 67 Ramsdell Street, the newly-elected Mayor, congratulated the members and the Moderator. She stated that the Council hopes to establish open communication and have more dialogue with the RTM as both governing bodies wrestle with the issues facing the Town. She invited members to contact any of the Councilors to discuss any concerns.

F. APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY RULES & PROCEDURES COMMITTEE

2011-0225 Appointment of Temporary Rules & Procedures Committee

APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY RULES & PROCEDURES COMMITTEE TO PREPARE RULES FOR THE TWENTY-EIGHTH RTM

The Moderator hereby appoints the following as a temporary Rules & Procedures Committee to review and recommend Rules and Procedures for the Twenty-eighth RTM:

1. Rep. Svencer, Chair
2. Rep. Semeraro
3. Rep. Conley
4. Rep. DeMatto
5. Rep. Swindell

This matter was Adopted.

G. RECEPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS

Moderator Ambroise announced that Joe Baril was elected at a District 1 caucus prior to this meeting per section 3.4.2. of the Town Charter. He confirmed that Reps. Granatosky and Massett

wil serve as the Democratic and Republican Floor Leaders.

H. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER

1. Financial report

Mr. Oefinger reported that the Fund Balance as of June 30, 2011 is approximately \$10.1 million; the General Contingency balance is \$350,000; the Capital Reserve balance is \$1,016,841. He stated that the increase to the Capital Reserves is attributable to funds received from the Clean Water Fund, interest income and recording fees.

2. Monthly briefing

The Town Manager highlighted various items from the Town Manager's News. He stated that the projected savings from refunding existing bonds is \$1.2 million dollars over the term of the bonds. He mentioned that the mill rate will be increasing due to revaluation and the decrease in property values. He noted that a fair number of property values have declined, but some property values have increased due to the type of property and neighborhood.

In response to Rep. Loughlin, the Town Manager clarified that the sidewalk replacement project at the intersection of Route 1 and Buddington Road was a CIP project approved by the Town Council and RTM during budget deliberations.

In response to Rep. Cerf, the Town Manager explained the procedure for the bond refunding that was recently completed after approval by the Town Council and RTM.

I. REPORT OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

School Superintendent Paul Kadri mentioned that the Board of Education (BOE) is conducting a public survey to assist in the BOE decision to consolidate the middle schools and adjust the long-range facility plan for Town schools. He looks forward to establishing a dialogue and having effective communication with the Town Council/Board of Education/RTM Committee in the coming year as they plan for the future educational needs of Groton.

J. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Moderator Ambrose reappointed the members of the Consolidation Committee. He added the following members: Reps. Aument, Bauer and Cerf. The Moderator will not continue to serve on the committee.

1. CONSOLIDATION - Chairman Pasqualini

Chairman Pasqualini read the minutes of the meeting held on December 14, 2011. (Minutes are attached to the permanent record.)

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Rep. Pasqualini, seconded by Rep. Luck and so voted unanimously.

The Moderator noted that a joint meeting of the Town Council and Board of Education is scheduled for Monday, December 19, 2011 at the Town Hall Annex at 6:00 p.m. to discuss shared services.

2011-0184 Feasibility Study of Consolidation of Various Town & BOE Departments

FEASIBILITY STUDY OF CONSOLIDATION OF TOWN & BOE HUMAN RESOURCES, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY & FINANCE DEPARTMENTS

Discussed

Rep. Semeraro requested to be excused from this committee due to personal conflicts in the coming months.

Rep. Hedrick volunteered to serve on this committee.

K. OTHER BUSINESS

2011-0245 Letter re zero tax increase budget

This matter was Referred to the RTM Finance Committee.

Rep. Kotowski requested a referral to the RTM Finance Committee to draft a letter to the Town Council, Board of Education and School Superintendent strongly urging them to present a zero tax increase budget option to the RTM.

Members discussed the effects of revaluation and the ability to create a budget that would not increase taxes for all taxpayers. Other items discussed were the Grand Levy, Town revenue and the desirability of not increasing the budget bottom line.

Rep. Granatosky objected to this referral based on the discussion at the last RTM meeting.

Moderator Ambroise stated that a referral has been made and that anyone may attend the committee meeting. Debate on this item can take place when the committee reports back to the full RTM.

The Town Manager explained that he controls the budget bottom line but that revenue is only an estimated figure. He stated that revaluation further complicates this issue since property values are changing. He noted that some property values have increased and some have decreased and there is no way he can produce a budget that includes no tax increase for all taxpayers.

Mr. Kadri remarked on cost containment and increasing revenue as they affect taxation. He advocates that the governing bodies of the Town and the Board of Education work jointly to explore opportunities to increase revenue growth. He feels that the Town can not survive on cost containment alone.

L. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 8:45 p.m. was made by Rep. Harrell, seconded by Rep. Luck and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

*Betsy Moukawsher, Town Clerk
Clerk of the RTM*

Sally A. Whitney, Assistant Town Clerk